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**Sex is Still Politics: An Analysis of Race, Gender Performance, and Political
Leaning in the Thomas-Hill and Clinton-Lewinsky Sex Scandals**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement
for the degree of Bachelors of Arts in Women's Studies
from the College of William and Mary.

By

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Accepted for: _____
(Honors, High Honors, Highest Honors)

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Introduction

“Sex is politics.” This phrase, the title of an essay published by Gore Vidal in 1979 (Joshi 61), sums up the paparazzi-esque view many Americans have when it comes to sex scandals and the “non-normative” sex lives of public figures, especially politicians. After all, those whom the people elect to lead the country in suits, ties, heels, and skirts should be upstanding people upholding those all-too-perfect “normal” sexual standards that are the symbol of right in America. Vidal’s statement, however, also reveals a further truth about the way the media covers sex scandals in America – they are a form of politics. These scandals open a window into seeing how everything around us forms, reforms, and fits into our understandings of self, the other, and power. Studying sex scandals, those involved, and the media’s reaction to them reveals a lens through which we see how American society functions around and understands power dynamics, stereotypes, and history.

Looking in America’s past, political sex scandals have always been a part of American discussions, a part of American politics. From America’s founding, well into the end of the 1800s, Americans directly examined, scrutinized, and published information about political officials’ sex lives (Summers 825). By the 1900s, examination of these sex lives became less overt, but it was still an important and popular part of political discussions (Summers 825). However, the scrutiny and conversation about these scandals underwent a radical transformation in the late 20th century with the development of a strong, pervasive, and multi-faceted media communications field. With media technological advancement and accessibility, it became much easier to monitor and report politicians’ sex lives so everyone would be aware of these “scandals” (Thompson x). At

the close of the 1900s, during this thriving media transformation, two sex scandals took place that rocked the American political world. The scandals involved two seemingly opposite political officials, a conservative, African-American Supreme Court Justice nominee and a white, liberal President. They also exposed two women, again opposites of each other, one a middle-aged, African-American woman who was presented in many ways as the epitome of respect and responsibility, the other a young white/Jewish woman who was showcased as sexually promiscuous and immature. Through the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas and Monica Lewinsky/Bill Clinton sex scandals, we can study the way sex scandals reveal how American society frames, understands, and stereotypes the world around us.

While the interaction between Anita Hill and Clarence Thomas actually took place over the years 1981 – 1983, these events were not publicized, scrutinized, and studied by the media until ten years later, 1991. Clarence Thomas was chosen to fill Thurgood Marshall's vacating seat on the Supreme Court in the summer of 1991 (Phelps and Winternitz 13). President George H.W. Bush nominated Thomas, a conservative African-American appellate judge, to replace "legend" civil rights judge Marshall (Phelps and Winternitz 4). By recommending another African-American judge, Bush was able to gain support of groups like the NAACP (Phelps and Winternitz 12) and be touted as someone promoting diversity, while at the same time trying to sway a court that had been moving in a more liberal direction back to his more conservative ideology (Phelps and Winternitz 2). Thomas, while not an experienced judge (Phelps and Winternitz 4), was extremely talented and the Bush administration thought, especially with the NAACP's support, it would be an easy confirmation (Phelps and Winternitz 12). The first few days

of the Senate Confirmation Hearings went well for Thomas. He proved cool under the questions of the Senators and was hard to pin down on specific sides of key issues like abortion (Phelps and Winternitz 195). It looked like this hearing would have a quick end with a strong affirmative vote for Thomas. However, during this entire time, Anita Hill, who had known Thomas ten years before, had been having a private struggle over whether to divulge a personal story about Thomas that could greatly hamper his nomination. After much debate, Hill spoke to Senators, journalists, and members of the FBI, coming forward to announce her allegations of sexual harassment by Clarence Thomas (Phelps and Winternitz 210).

After delays, and even after Clarence Thomas denied Hill's allegations before she had a chance to make them in a public forum, Hill took the stand at the confirmation hearings to give her testimony about sexual harassment that allegedly took place ten years earlier. According to Hill, during the three years she worked for Clarence Thomas, he had asked her out several times, which, after she refused, turned into graphic sexual conversation (Phelps and Winternitz 308). Her testimony included descriptions of how Thomas would discuss his sexual exploits with other women, the size of his penis, and pornographic films he enjoyed watching (Phelps and Winternitz 308- 310). Hill also included the now infamous story of the Coke can:

One of the oddest episodes I remember was an occasion in which Thomas was drinking a Coke in his office. He got up from the table at which we were working, went over to his desk to get the Coke, looked at the can and asked, 'Who has put pubic hair on my Coke?' (Phelps and Winternitz 309-10).

Hill's allegations sent the hearings into a frenzy, and the Bush administration and those so confident about Thomas' nomination were no longer so sure. Following this, Thomas had a chance to defend himself again, and then a final vote was called for. By a very

slight margin (52 to 48), Thomas was appointed to the Supreme Court (Phelps and Winternitz 413), but questions around the sex scandal that Hill testified about are not completely resolved, and Thomas is still subject to questions and rumors about them.

The Thomas/Hill scandal shocked America – here a seemingly respectable, conservative, normative man was being accused of graphic sexual harassment, and he was staunchly defending himself, saying it never happened. The media, the American public, even those involved in the hearing did not know how to make sense of what was going on. Because of this, they employed different lenses to frame the event to clarify exactly what was going on. In this sex scandal, many issues complicated the media presentation, making it about so much more than simply the sexual harassment that was alleged. It truly was a story that changed the face of American politics. Less than ten years after Thomas' nomination hearings, another scandal took place, implicating a president, that would continue to alter the face of sexual politics.

The Clinton/Lewinsky sex scandal unraveled on American television screens in the year 1998, towards the close of Clinton's second term as President. In respect to international relations and public policy, people seemed relatively content and happy (Kalb 13-4). Sex scandals were not something new to President or, formerly, Governor Clinton. Many of them, including the Gennifer Flowers incident (Kalb 15), the Paula Jones sexual harassment case (Kalb 24), and more, had spattered Bill Clinton's political life, and had come to be semi-commonplace in terms of public understanding of Clinton's character (Kalb 14). However, even with this relative calm over the President's sexual exploits, the Lewinsky scandal would tarnish Clinton's reputation beyond all others and make presidential history. Lewinsky worked in the White House in different roles from

1995 until 1996, when she moved to the Pentagon. Little was said of Lewinsky while she actually worked at the White House or in the few months thereafter. However, soon after the New Year in 1998, a huge story broke (Kalb 32) – Clinton and Lewinsky had been having an affair from 1995-1997. The story came out as a part of the Paula Jones sexual harassment case and was used to prove Clinton’s sexual life was littered with sex outside of marriage, which was supposed to bolster the Jones case (Busby 51). Clinton’s testimony, where he said he and Lewinsky had not had a sexual relationship, was proven a lie due to taped conversations with Linda Tripp, a friend and fellow Pentagon worker of Lewinsky’s, among other pieces of evidence (Busby 65). In response, he was charged with perjury with intent to mislead the court, which put him on trial for impeachment (Busby 66). The details that came out in both the Jones case and the impeachment trial shocked the public and the media in a way that changed the rest of the Clinton presidency.

Through testimonies, scientific evidence, and the taped evidence Linda Tripp gave, it was determined that Clinton and Lewinsky had indeed had an affair, lasting roughly from November 1995 until May 1997 (Kalb 24). The affair between the two of them never consisted of “conventional sexual encounters” (Busby 52), but rather such behaviors as oral sex. In one incident, which became famous, some of Clinton’s semen stained a dress of Lewinsky’s, a piece of evidence that was used to prove that an affair was occurring between the two (Busby 54). Two people most responsible for bringing the case forward were Linda Tripp and Ken Starr, a man who had originally investigated a financial scandal implicating the Clintons (Kalb 16), and who published a report on what happened between Clinton and Lewinsky (Busby 55). While Clinton was impeached, he

was not removed from office (Busby 165), and continued to finish the last two years of his term amid discussion and commentary on his sexual scandal with Lewinsky.

The Clinton/Lewinsky scandal marked the second impeachment of a president ever, and the only one related to a sex scandal. The scandal had much of the media framing and reframing Clinton and Lewinsky in ways to make sense of what was going on – how to address a president like Clinton involved in such scandals. What about him made this possible? What about her caused this to happen? These subconscious questions caused an unique framing of the scandal, one that is a unique portrayal of understanding of power, scandal, and “otherness” in American culture.

While the Hill/Thomas and the Lewinsky/Clinton scandal have many differences between them, they are also comparable on many levels. The two scandals are the largest sex scandals at the close of the 20th century, and their occurrences truly did change the face of media and politics. Three possible lenses through which to compare them are race, gender, and politics. Racially, the two scandals present a seemingly straightforward comparison— Hill and Thomas are both African-Americans, while Clinton and Lewinsky are both, at least by appearance, “white.” However, examining media- and self-portrayals in these two scandals reveal how race and racial politics are about much more than skin color. Looking through a gendered lens illustrates the dichotomies that arise between the two scandals, showing how “proper” gendered individuals should act, as opposed to those who are “improper” in their gender performance. Finally, comparing the two scandals based on the political affiliation of those involved, it is interesting to see how not only levels of conservative versus liberal bias come into play, but also concepts of agency and citizenship, and how certain people are allowed to use them, while they are stripped from

others. Examining both of these scandals in this way provides a greater understanding of how American culture frames and understands relationships, sexual or not, especially in relation to power. Therefore, looking at the Thomas/Hill and Clinton/Lewinsky sex scandals through lenses of race, gender performance, and political leaning illustrates how stereotypes govern the way the media and politics run in the country today.

There is little literature that actually comparatively addresses the two scandals. There have, however, been substantial amounts of literature written about both events separately. Some are general media responses, but there are also many scholarly articles and books written analyzing Clinton, Lewinsky, Thomas, and Hill's actions. Some of these were specific to the three issue-areas I was investigating, while the others were much more general. In doing my specific research, I used a three-fold approach to analyzing the situation. I first looked at primary sources about the scandals, then media analysis of these events, and finally scholarly articles written both about the outcomes and about broader theory.

Using this three-fold approach I was able to analytically examine the broader implications of the Thomas-Hill and Clinton-Lewinsky scandals. The primary sources I used included direct transcripts of both hearings, as well as video and pictures of the hearings. This allowed me to get a direct view of the self-presentation and framing of the individuals and the trials. I then looked at media responses to the trials, as well as popular media that may not have directly related to the scandals, but rather are commentaries on society in general. The media response to the trials was useful in understanding how each situation was framed and presented to the public. These reflected societal norms at the time, as well as influenced how the public saw the figures involved. I looked at popular

media that was not related to the scandals as well to gain greater insight into societal understandings and norms around such issues as race and gender. This means that some of my sources might not seem scholarly, but that was done purposefully to engage with broader society and see understandings about race and gender. Many proponents of media studies argue that mass media gives insight into how society works. In their book on media analysis, Croteau and Hoynes say, “In contemporary society, the mass media serve as a powerful socializing agent” (14). They illustrate this point by suggesting that “Viewers learn and internalize some of the values, beliefs, and norms presented in media products” (15). Thus, by looking at media, we can see some of the assumptions that are in place in society at large. Gamson, for example, says, “media representations are part of a more general system of oppression of nonheterosexuals” (*Freaks Talk Back* 19). His example shows how media representation, as Croteau and Hoynes argue, is reflective of larger society. Finally, I also used scholarly articles written both about the scandals and about broader theories I invoke in my argument. There is a plethora of articles and books addressing both situations individually, which was my largest source of research. I drew largely on critical analysis of the two scandals, often drawing on essays by such authors and editors as Lisa Duggan, Toni Morrison, Nell Painter, and others. I also looked at more detailed accounts of the two cases, such as those offered by Phelps and Winternitz or Busby in full books commenting on the events. These articles and books led me to conclusions about broader societal implications, through which I also bring in some broader theoretical arguments. These sources are based in larger societal theory by such authors as Joshua Gamson, Roderick Ferguson, Laud Humphries, and more. Through these three kinds of sources, I was able to effectively analyze both events and examine

how the media analysis of these events reveal greater societal frameworks surrounding race, gender, and politics.

This comparison between the Clinton-Lewinsky affair and the Thomas-Hill harassment case adds to both the analytic literature surrounding the scandals and also broader literature about how norms function within society. I hope that my analysis not only addresses issues unaddressed in other literature, but also introduces some new ideas. Specifically, the concept of the pure white category and the boy/man dichotomy I introduce are largely my articulations of what I found through my research. My goal in this work is to critically analyze these two scandals and media responses to them to articulate societal norms at the time surrounding issues of race, gender performance, and politics. Specifically, this is a piece about societal norms represented in these two cases during the 1990s. Things have changed since this time, but this snapshot provides useful information about pervading norms and ideas that still influence American culture today.

The media representation and self-representation during these two scandals illustrate societal norms that operate around issues of race, gender, and politics. These norms are rooted within this time period, but they are applicable to our understanding of these three factors in society today. In the first chapter, I look at how racial frameworks influence these two scandals. Specifically, Clinton and Lewinsky were “othered” as separate from the white race, which, linked with the politics of respectability and racial othering employed during the Thomas hearings, illustrates that there is a societal norm of the “pure white,” which everyone should strive to embody. In the second chapter, I address how gender dichotomies influence society’s assumptions about masculine and feminine actors in politics. For example, Hill and Lewinsky fit into the dichotomy of the

Madonna/Whore (Conrad 310), structuring them as antithetical to one another, illustrating the societal understanding of “appropriate” behavior for women, as well as how women are pitted against one another. In contrast, Thomas and Clinton illustrate a dichotomy of the boy/man, where Clinton represents the mischievous boy and Thomas the dignified man. Further complicating this norm about men being “redeemable” boys who will one day become men is race. Thinking of the epithet of “boy” directed at black men, is it ever possible in American society for a person of color to be the redeemable boy, or is this only an aspect of white privilege? Finally, in the third chapter, I address how issues of political citizenship affected each individual’s relationship to the political world. Lewinsky and Hill, due to public discomfort with their involvement in politics given the linkage between their names and sex, were treated as apolitical actors in the two scandals. Contrastingly, Clinton and Thomas were given more political agency, and, instead, critics argued that their sex lives should not be addressed because they were not applicable to their political lives. Applying these three lenses to both political scandals gives insight into how American culture frames and understands race, gender, and politics.

Racial Dynamics: Neither the Color of their Skin nor the Content of their Characters

America is now a society where race is one of the first identity categories we are told to assign: college applications, job applications, government forms, all of these have a “race” box. Looking back on this relationship to race, American history is synonymous with subjugation, marginalization, and enslavement of non-white people. For example, when looking at African-American history within the United States, due to slavery, reconstruction, and the general oppression up through modern times, it is apparent that race has a complicated history and an important, extremely contentious presence in society today. Due to this history steeped with racial othering and categorizing, race is obviously a complicated subject. Racial history has also had a tenuous relationship with sexuality. As seen in the black trials and lynching in the early 1900s, African-Americans were viewed as sexually licentious, deviant, and in general, impure (D’Emilio and Freedman 220). In his book *Aberrations in Black*, Roderick Ferguson states, while examining the link between sexual stereotypes and race, that efforts were made “to link the figure of the prostitute to the alleged sexual savagery of black women and to install nonwhite sexuality as the axis upon which various notions of womanhood turned” (9). Black women were also characterized as having larger genitalia than was normal, to prove this strong amount of sexual desire (Somerville 246). Black men were said to have a greater preference for white women, something considered immoral and sexually deviant (Somerville 252). Whites, in contrast, were viewed as the sexually pure; whites were moral, they resisted sexual advances. These assumptions and stereotypes have continued in American culture, but they have also elicited resistances, contradictions, and attempts to prove these beliefs wrong. This response has caused a counterargument about

the politics of sexually stereotyping individuals based on race. This timeframe of contesting black versus white sexual politics is where we find the Thomas/Hill and Clinton/Lewinsky scandals resting. By examining self- and media presentation during these two scandals, we can become more aware of societal assumptions about race. Society has come to a point where the overt racism of linking blackness to deviant sexuality is not a comfortable place, but it has not yet reached a point where racial frameworks do not play an important role in understanding the nature of sexual politics. This analysis shows how American norms are not as comfortable with overt racism, but the racial stereotypes of history have continued to pervade our minds in such a way that media characterizations still comply with these views.

Clarence Thomas and Anita Hill: Rewriting the Politics of Respectability

It is almost impossible to overstate how much race was a factor in the Thomas/Hill scandal during the early 1990s. As Thomas had been selected to replace Thurgood Marshall on the Supreme Court, a justice who was known for fighting for civil rights for African-Americans while on the court, race was an immediate issue beginning at Thomas' nomination. In fact, one of the largest worries about Thomas as a justice was that he would not continue Marshall's legacy (Phelps and Winternitz 46). He was even seen as being sympathetic to apartheid in South Africa (Phelps and Winternitz 68), a stance that brought about huge criticisms from African-American interest groups (such as the NAACP) during this time. Therefore, by the time Hill came forward with her sexual harassment charges against Thomas, race was already on everyone's mind.

Both Thomas and Hill had grown up during an era when the history of race and sexuality formed into the “politics of respectability” which was preached in many venues. The “politics of respectability,” discussed by Evelyn Higginbotham in her book *Righteous Discontent*, began in the black Baptist women’s movement, where, in response to the sexual stereotypes society was leveling against blacks, these women responded by “condemn[ing] what they perceived to be negative practices and attitudes among their own people” (187). However, in doing this, there was a kind of negative repercussion in which recognizing these stereotypes and working against them, the movement actually allowed “these women [to help] authorize racist stereotypes” (White 36). Even given that this could actually perpetuate stereotypes of African-Americans, however, the politics of respectability became popular and had a huge impact on the African-American community’s self and outside representations.

When Hill and Thomas testified during the Senate confirmation hearings, their words and actions represented knowledge of and personal reaction to this politics of respectability. Thomas, during all of his statements about Hill’s testimony, overtly brought up his race, arguing it was a factor in why this sexual scandal was happening. He employed American racial history as a narrative for his own trial. He called the trial a “high tech lynching” (Robinson and Powell 283), claiming that the trial “reflect[ed] pernicious racial stereotypes about the sexual lives of African-American males” (Robinson and Powell 289). Thomas’ ability to appeal to this historic trope of the lynched black man (Lacour 209) caused guilty feelings among the white senators confirming him, and thereby gave him an advantage during the trial (Grindstaff 38). Thus, Thomas was

able to use a history of oppression, racism, and bigotry to his advantage – he used this frame to display himself as the victim, a victim of racism and oppression.

Thomas also employed the “politics of respectability” as he presented who he “actually” was – not the sexualized black man this “lynching” was making him out to be. He called himself the “ideal Chivalric American gentleman” (Robinson and Powell 283), appealing to this “American ideal,” which is a large part of the politics of respectability. Higginbotham emphasizes the importance of the American identity to the politics of respectability, the concept that this identity was unique and important to being “respectable” (Higginbotham 187). Thomas appealed to this American identity when he presented himself as a man who was the picture of a moral life, a strict sexual code, who was respectful and helpful to women (Painter 203). To make sure the Senators listening understood what a “good” man he was, he contrasted his story with that of his sister. He characterized her as a welfare queen and a deadbeat, everything stereotypical about African-American women that the “politics of respectability” was fighting against (Painter 203). He narrated himself as someone who came out of a difficult situation, worked hard, and became the upright moral man he was today, as opposed to someone who was lazy and did not want to work, like his sister. This counterexample fits perfectly into the “politics of respectability” and shows how Thomas wanted to employ this method to make sure his moral standing was not in question in the court.

Thomas’ use of his own race displays a use of knowledge and understanding about the racial history and the tensions between race and sexuality in American culture. However, Thomas’ use of these beliefs worked out to a personal gain, rather than an outright contestation of them. He profoundly confronts the stereotype of the sexually

deviant black man, but it caused an emotional response to the issue, rather than a theoretical debate about the issue. Thomas' language was peppered with racial colloquialisms and racial history in such a way that it made anyone convicting him appear racist – he framed the entire situation in a racial way so that the situation had to end favorably. He used a history that was full of oppression and exploitation to members of his race in such a way that it benefitted him. While he gave factual stories and information about African-American history in America, his using these tropes and narratives in his own self-presentation illustrates the tension now in America about the racial reason behind the sexual charges. Thomas pushed on a tender area of American society – there is definitely racism present in many sexual stories, media, and trials today. American society, having been made aware of this racism through critical race studies and journalism, is often wary of appearing racist in their responses to such scandals. Thomas capitalized on this wariness to address these issues in a way that created a more positive atmosphere for him. This tactic illustrates the complexities of the racial framework in America. It is constantly there, it is always present, but many people are afraid that bringing it to the surface will show their underlying racism. Thus, they bury it, and most of the time it goes undetected. However, by bringing race to the very front of what was happening, by *making* it the supreme issue, Thomas confronted those fears in an attempt to save himself from scandal.

Hill had a very different relationship to her racial identity during the confirmation hearings. While Thomas wanted to bring up his race as much as possible in an attempt to frame the hearing in terms of a racial attack against him, Hill mentions her race as little as possible, attempting to not “deal in black and white” (Painter 213). Hill's testimony,

unlike Thomas', was not full of allusions and references to a racial history, but rather solely concerned with the evidence she was giving. She was very factual in her explanation and gave little or no emotional interpretation of the events between her and Thomas (Lacour 132). Just because Hill seemed to want to avoid race, however, did not make her self-presentation or how others represented her racially neutral. Hill's self-presentation focused largely on the attempt to depict herself as a respectable woman, and while her story depends greatly on this idea, there seems to be a link in this self-representation and the politics of respectability. Also, Thomas and his supporters framed Hill in such a way that it put pressure on the black/white racial binary category.

Hill's self-presentation during the trials was of an extremely moral character, a strong upstanding woman. She opened her testimony with a description of her family upbringing, one of hard work and, like Thomas', a story epitomizing the American dream. Hill's description of her responses to Thomas' sexual harassment make her seem devoid of emotion and only focused on the facts, as she presents them (Lacour 132). Grindstaff and Painter both analyzed Hill's testimony and claim that one of the reasons she could not bring in her race was her lack of a historic trope with which to identify. The only narratives open to her were those of the "mammy, welfare queen, and jezebel" (Painter 210), none of which would have made her story more understandable, more identifiable for the senators listening. In contrast, identifying with one of these tropes would instead have made her story less credible. The politics of respectability, as Higginbotham describes them, were based on moving away from these assumptions, depicting the "right" black community as without these kinds of people (Higginbotham

194). Hill seems to embody this self-presentation when presenting herself as the upstanding woman without any attention drawn to her race.

While Hill tried to present herself without race being a hinging factor, Thomas and his supporters, to keep their narrative of the lynched black man going, had to bring Hill into that narrative through a kind of racially charged role. However, Thomas' story was less credible if Hill was perceived as an equally oppressed, victimized person in America's racial history (Robinson and Powell 292). Somehow, Thomas' camp had to frame Hill as not an African-American in this story, but something else. Because of this, Thomas and his supporters did their best to characterize Hill as almost white, or at least, not black. Thomas chose the "black-woman-traitor-to-the-race" trope to use for Hill (Painter 205) because it would paint Hill as non-black, which would allow the American audience to better understand her, and in turn, not believe her story. Because Thomas had painted himself as the black victim of racism, his perpetrator had to be someone who could victimize him. A black woman who had betrayed her race for personal gain fit into this story perfectly. He depicted her as a "scorned woman" (Robinson and Powell 295) who had not received promotions from him while working, so she was going to repay him. He also framed her actions by stripping her of her agency and putting her actions into the hands of white politicians. Thomas claimed that Hill was testifying against him as a pawn of liberal conspirators to keep him out of the Supreme Court (Robinson and Powell 295, Brock 286). By stripping Hill of her agency and putting her identity in the hands of white men, he again racially "othered" her by making her not the upstanding black individual he claimed to be, but rather someone who did not quite belong to the African-American race.

Both Thomas and Hill represent unique interpretations and framing of blacks within American history and how the politics of respectability has influenced American understanding of race. While first examining this scandal, it might appear that Thomas, being a well-off conservative politician, was constructed as racially “white” and Hill was constructed as the black victim. Thomas’ use of American racism and its undercurrent in society, and the shame associated with its overt applications, rewrote this frame into one where he was the victim of racism and Hill was the victimizer. However, in the way Thomas tries to make this story work, his actions show which frames Americans see sexual deviancy through. It was still necessary to depict Hill as a racial “other” and himself as a “moral” individual, both of ideas which assimilate to white hegemonic values. His genius framing makes the situation seem completely different, but at closer analysis, it repeats, and even expands upon, this historic American frame of race and sexuality.

Bill Clinton and Monica Lewinsky: The Making of the Not-Quite-White

The Clinton/Lewinsky scandal seemed much less focused than the Thomas/Hill scandal on race, at least on the surface. The seemingly obvious reason is that both parties were white, a racial category viewed in America as essentially being without race, or the neutral race, and therefore, a sex scandal involving two white Americans would not need to be viewed through a racial lens. The Clinton/Lewinsky scandal, however, was extremely racially charged, just not as vocally as the Thomas-Hill one, because in American history, white people have been framed as the “morally sound,” those who are sexually correct. In her book *Revealing Whiteness*, Shannon Sullivan, claims that “to be

sexually pure is to be racially pure” (74). While there are definitely some aberrations from this norm, the general understanding was that white people did not have sex scandals; if they did, there had to be some great explanatory factor to warrant this. Therefore, it is not extremely surprising that when Lewinsky and Clinton, two consenting adults participating in sexual activity, were brought into the media light, some kind of racial construction other than “white” must be present to make sense of the sex scandal. This construction took form in the not-so-good kind of white people, a not-quite-white category. This construction also followed gendered tropes, making Clinton and Lewinsky fulfill expectations of these almost-white Americans whose existences make those “pure” whites much more comfortable. By separating Lewinsky and Clinton from “whites,” the belief in the purity of the “white race” is still possible for society. They are racially othered to uphold this ideal category.

Lewinsky was the easier of the two to do this with, because Lewinsky was not exactly what many people would consider “American” white. Monica Lewinsky is Jewish. Due to the taboo in the American media on mentioning race, however, Lewinsky’s Jewishness was not focused upon during the scandal coverage (Garber 175). Even though her ethnicity was not focused upon, however, the media did capitalize on her non-whiteness (Garber 205). Lewinsky’s Jewishness was not, in itself, a way to construe her as sexually deviant enough to participate in this affair with Clinton. Jewishness was not an effective link to sexual deviancy for the media. As a matter of fact, according to Ann Pellegrini, her analysis of how Jewishness is viewed as race indicates that, “all Jews are womanly but no women are Jews” (18). The feminine gender is not associated with Jews in a sexual sense; Jewishness is not assumed to be at all linked to

sexual activity. Male Jews are stereotyped as always effeminate, but the idea that feminine Jews cannot be real women implies that this includes a sexual aspect. Jews are not viewed as sexual enough to create this framework. Sander Gilman, when looking at how Jews develop due to societal stereotypes about them, found that “normal sexual development of the Jew is consequently stunted for lack of an appropriate sexual outlet” (160). However, there are ways that Jewishness can be linked with sexual deviance – through its geographic closeness to Africa. Given the concentration of Jewish history in the modern Middle East, very close to Africa, there is possibly an association with African stereotypes. Pelligrini sheds light on this when discussing how, because of this geographic closeness, Jewishness may be linked with blackness, and thus with the stereotypes of African sexuality (20). The assumption is that people of “darker skin” that are rooted in this area of the world have similar propensities of behavior, and thus by linking Jews and Africans geographically, we can also link their behaviors to one another. Therefore, even though specific mention of Lewinsky’s Jewishness was taboo and unfruitful in the media’s linking between racial non-whiteness and sexual deviancy, a subtle use of this racial “otherness” provided the solution that presented Lewinsky as not white. The media capitalized on Lewinsky’s non-white features (or Jewish features, arguably) to exoticize her and strip her of her whiteness.

As it became apparent that Lewinsky had been a willing partner (a *very* willing partner, some were saying), Lewinsky’s physical appearance was scrutinized as not being “white,” but rather “exotic.” When the scandal first came to light, especially granted that it was brought out during a sexual harassment trial against Clinton, the media depicted Lewinsky as the passive victim (McElya 161). However, very quickly Lewinsky and

Tripp cleared up that misunderstanding about Lewinsky's willingness to be sexual with president Clinton, and the aspect of reporting on Lewinsky began to change. The media began to focus on Lewinsky's "exotic" features such as her eyes, her lips, and her hair (Garber 205). The supposedly non-whiteness of her body, like her large lips, heavy makeup, and thick hair (Garber 180), became the focus of the media racial presentation of Lewinsky. This change made it possible for the media to view Lewinsky through this racially othered outlet without having to designate a "new" race for Lewinsky – she was still Jewish, arguably not-quite-white. She just wasn't pure white. Once she was linked to being non-white, the step was easy to attach her to the "whore" trope associated with the not-good-kind-of-white people. As Ann Lucas sees in her research on stereotypes of prostitution, it was generally assumed that non-white women were "promiscuous, indiscriminate in choice of sexual partner, and likely to be prostitutes" (56). Once Lewinsky's "pure white" label was taken away, she was automatically associated with these non-white groups. Therefore, the link to her being a non-white person who was sexually deviant was easy, because it is assumed that these people are more naturally sexually deviant. Thus, Lewinsky's racialized presentation was a way to link her to this deviant race and gender role.

Lewinsky's racial treatment indicates a discomfort in the media with white women being willingly involved in sexually deviant acts. When she was first perceived as a victim, Lewinsky was not racially othered. Her whiteness, or assumed whiteness, did not seem to be a problem. However, as her sexual deviancy became more obvious, there was a greater attempt in the media to eroticize her racial otherness. By doing this, it seems that her sexual otherness made more sense to the public. To fit into this framework

of racial understanding in the United States, Lewinsky had to be framed as non-white in order for her sexual participation with Clinton to be understandable.

Clinton was faced with a similar situation in the analysis of his participation in sexual activities with Lewinsky. However, there was not a seemingly as obvious a solution to Clinton's racial "otherness" as Lewinsky's Jewishness had provided. Instead, Clinton was very obviously white. However, the media constructed Clinton's behavior and actions in a way that was far from what is considered appropriate white behavior. Some other way to spin Clinton's race had to make sense. Instead, Clinton was racially typed as being "white trash" (McElya 157). Constructing Bill Clinton as white trash was the perfect racially othering tool the media could use to frame his participation in sexual activity with Monica Lewinsky.

Toni Morrison argued that Clinton was construed as "black," given some of his personality traits, personal history, and sexual behavior (McElya 156). Morrison says that "After all, Clinton displays almost every trope of blackness: single-parent household, born poor, working-class, saxophone-playing, McDonald's-and-junk-food-loving boy from Arkansas" (Morrison 1). While the media's treatment of Clinton definitely points in this direction, black does not quite fit how Clinton was portrayed. Given how Thomas' use of blackness played out, and the strong history of blackness within American culture, Clinton's portrayal does not seem to fit this deep cultural background. On the surface it appears akin to African-American media-given racial identity, but that analogy does not seem to go far enough. Part of the reason Clinton does not fit into this black idea, but rather one of "white trash," is his origins. Clinton grew up in Arkansas, has a distinct southern accent, and not a genteel one at that. This link between the south and so-called

white trash people is very strong. While people all over the country are labeled “white trash,” “a southern child is required to learn that white trash folks are the lowest of the low” (Penley 90). Clinton’s southernness, along with the factors Morrison addresses, links him very strongly with the white trash category. Clinton’s past, part of which included being from a poor family, fit marginally into this concept of being white trash (McElya 157).

The concept of white trash has been used in the media to distinguish between middle class whites and lower class whites (Harry 218). Being part of the white trash culture means having a certain fondness for “music, food, ...and general lifestyle preferences” (Harry 218), while living a life filled with “unwanted children, deadbeat dads” (Harry 218). They are often seen as “garish” (Harry 226) and even cartoonish (Harry 226). One of the overarching features of the white trash category seems to be “sexual promiscuity” (Newitz and Wray 2). This idea of being white trash is unique in its relationship with whiteness, and the shame about certain kinds of white people. Clinton’s sexual deviancy was thus linked to this non-normative not-quite-white racial designation. He was related to the sexually promiscuous white trash male, the “deadbeat dad” (Harry 218). While Clinton did not, as far as has been reported, father any out-of-wedlock children, the stereotype of sleeping with multiple women and not being responsible within those relationships seemed to fit the way the media constructed Clinton’s affairs. This created a framework within which the media could understand the sex scandal. If Clinton was part of a racial identity for whom sexual promiscuity, sexual deviancy, was on par, then it was easier to understand his actions with Lewinsky.

Race in the Clinton and Lewinsky scandal shows how, just as with the Hill/Thomas scandal, American society sees racial otherness as strongly associated with sexual deviance. Lewinsky was already not-quite-white because she was Jewish, but the media played up her physical appearance, specifically the aspects of it that made her exotic, less normatively white, to construct her as a racial other. Clinton, too, was made to look not-quite-white. While Morrison argues that Clinton was the first black president, given all of the stereotypical African-American tropes Clinton embodied, the media's treatment of Clinton does not seem to warrant the identification of black. Rather, the fascination with Clinton's food habits, music love, and sexual acts seems more synonymous with the culture of white trash. Thus, by creating these racial categories of almost-white status for Clinton and Lewinsky, the media presented a framework within which American society could understand the sex scandal they watched unfold.

Conclusions: A Racial Story of Othering

Race in the terms of the Thomas/Hill and Clinton/Lewinsky scandals is far from simple. The coverage of the Thomas/Hill scandal seemed to rework the old American trope of the black man being lynched for his supposed sexual advances towards a white woman. Thomas framed the situation as such, highlighting his racial identity as a factor into how this worked. In doing so, he had to frame Hill as being a traitor to the black race and a pawn of white politicians as a way to cast himself in a positive light. Lewinsky and Clinton are both put into categories that are just slightly off white. Lewinsky's race is depicted as exotic, not a specific racial category but still not "white," and Clinton is hidden within whites, by being given this white trash status. In conclusion, by looking

through the racial lens of the two sex scandals, every person was put into a narrative that did not quite mirror the race they would likely check in that “race” box. However, the actual races of these four individuals seemed to have little bearing on the way race played out during the events.

Hill, Clinton, and Lewinsky were not able to quite fit into an understandable framework for sex scandals. While Thomas framed himself and took control of the situation during his hearing, outsiders, to make better sense of what was going on, situated the other three individuals in question. This context shows the importance in American culture of the racial other – the non-white, however far from white that may be. Americans are uncomfortable with their own racial history of domination, oppression, and racism, but they are also unable to move away from that understanding of white as right. Thomas knew this, and took advantage of that situation, but he still presented himself and was framed in a way that he was an exception to this rule, he was more closely linked to being white. Hill, Clinton, and Lewinsky seemed to lose their agency in portraying themselves racially. Rather they were constructed as others as being in some way not-quite-white. Hill, a traitor to her race, was not African-American anymore. Lewinsky, through her physical features, was caricatured as an exotic individual, by seeming definition, non-white. Clinton was given the lowly status of white trash as a way to conceal his whiteness. Each individual was racially “othered” in some way, either by themselves or by others, and each was given a gendered role to play in those racial understandings. Race is not a seemingly simple subject, based solely on the way a person looks. In America, the racial framing society employs requires delicate balancing between stereotypes and preconceptions, but at the same time being willing to adjust how

we see things to keep those stereotypes in place. All of this racial othering shows how race is never what it may seem in America, and a deep analysis is necessary to begin to chip away at the complicated relationship Americans have, both consciously and subconsciously, to race and its history in America.

Gender Performance: A Story of Dichotomies

Norms within society also revolve very much around understandings of gender, and more specifically, appropriate genders. Gendered frameworks in American culture often focus upon the two most-recognized genders, masculine and feminine, and each of these genders is prescribed an appropriate kind of behavior. This behavior prescription encompasses every kind of action, from sex to dress to voice. In terms of sexuality, many theorists argue that there is a “double standard” (Cole and Rothblum 98) between men and women’s sexual roles in society. Men are supposed to want sex, while women are supposed to avoid sex (Cole and Rothblum 105). Women follow this aversion to sex for their whole life, and men, while they are always supposed to want sex, become more responsible and respectful of women in their sex life as they mature (KING magazine). This idea that societal norms inculcate individuals with these behavior patterns based upon gender is called gender performance. Judith Butler, a feminist and queer theorist, defined gender performativity, describing it as how individuals perform certain societal roles, and that societies understand these roles and are prescriptive of certain genders (Butler 42). These ideas of gender performance influence sex scandal examination and how society frames men and women’s sexual desires to understand their roles in sex acts. Joshua Gamson, in discussing how media coverage of sex scandals reveals societal understandings or morals and frameworks, argues that “scandal stories rely on and reproduce assumptions about gendered sexuality” (“Normal Sins” 197). In terms of the Hill/Thomas and Lewinsky/Clinton scandals, gender performance is framed around two dichotomies: the Madonna/whore dichotomy for Hill and Lewinsky, and the boy/man dichotomy for Thomas and Clinton.

Hill and Lewinsky: The Madonna and the whore

The way the media framed Anita Hill and Monica Lewinsky and how they acted in these sex scandals reflects the commonness of the Madonna/whore dichotomy in culture today. The Madonna/whore dichotomy terminology has its original roots in Freudian psychology, but its understanding today is based around the feminist idea that society understands women as either sexually “pure” and good, the Madonna, or as sexually deviant and bad, the whore (Conrad 310, Gamson “Jessica Hahn, media whore” 160-1). This concept stresses the idea that women are supposed to act as though they do not want sex, at least sex outside of monogamous heterosexual marriage, and if they do not they are automatically a problem to society. Kate Millett, in her book *Sexual Politics*, argues that “one of the chief effects of class within patriarchy is to set one woman against another...creating a lively antagonism between the whore and the matron” (38). This gender dichotomy divides women up in terms of their sexual identity, and at the same time puts women against one another. The media, within sex scandals, presenting women’s sex lives in front of the public, even further complicates this understanding of the Madonna/whore. Now, even the Madonna, the one who is embarrassed by sex, must have her sex life, to some extent, paraded in front of the public. She is not sexually deviant, but by merely having her name associated with a sex scandal, she is automatically associated with sex, seemingly contradictory to her Madonna label. Merely by invoking a woman within a sex scandal, even if she was not a willing participant, even if she was not a direct participant at all, her name becomes associated with sex, which is not “appropriate” gender behavior for women. However, it is still possible, though rare, to be a Madonna in a public sex scandal. The sex scandal is one of the ultimate forms of

public sexuality in today's society, and the evolution of women in public sex scandals illustrates how powerful this Madonna/whore dichotomy is within societal frames.

Gamson analyzes how this applies to women's involvement in sex scandals when he studies how "public" sexuality by women has changed in society. He writes,

The intransigent Madonna-whore dichotomy embodied in sex scandal women, updated to the image of the media virgin and the media whore and the media career woman, mark the terrain of female publicity with bright, flashing lights. Not all public women must enter that strict narrative, but all operate with those flashing lights in sight. ("Jessica Hahn, media whore" 171)

This understanding that all women in the public eye are understood in these terms, whether or not they choose to enter it, illustrates that the Madonna/whore complex is at play in how the media presents all women involved in sex scandals. Examining Hill and Lewinsky's roles in the 1990 sex scandals illustrate how this dichotomous frame also shaped their gender performance and the media's representation of their gender performance throughout the scandals.

Anita Hill embodied the Madonna throughout the scandal coverage. Both through her self-presentation and the discussion of her gender performance by others, she fit into this concept of the sexually "pure" woman. Given the discussion earlier of the black stereotypes in American culture, some may find it odd that Hill would be seen as the Madonna in this dichotomy. Generally, African-American women are stereotyped as being sexually deviant, often in terms of promiscuity and non-monogamous, unmarried sexual activity (Ferguson 9). However, the politics of respectability seemingly provide an answer here: if Hill presented herself in a positive light, showing herself as someone who distinctly did not fit into this stereotype, then it is possible for her to fit the Madonna – she just has to present herself as such, and there can be no conflicting evidence about her

as such. Hill had to consciously attempt to disassociate herself from these stereotypes about African-American women, as the politics of respectability movement called for, and no one could effectively counter this presentation. Hill did this, as did others, and thus her gender performance during the scandal coverage fits into the Madonna archetype.

When specifically looking at Hill's self-presentation, analysts have argued that Hill portrayed herself as this Madonna. Robinson and Powell specifically describe Hill as presenting herself as a "reserved American lady" (238). They also talk about how she was concerned about coming forward about these allegations for the same reason (291). As they point out, there was a lot of press about how Hill was concerned about coming forward. She seemed wary about discussing the things she was alleging, given their sexual nature, and did not want to make a public spectacle about them (Robinson and Powell 291). During her testimony, Hill also acted and looked like a respectable, asexual woman, which, if she must be divided in between the Madonna and the whore, cast her as the Madonna. As Kimberle Crenshaw points out, Hill focused during her testimony and in her story about being the virtuous woman, well above the stereotypes of African-American women's sexuality (407). She distanced herself from her sexuality. Her testimony was solely based on the concept that she was not a sexual participant in her interactions with Thomas. Her attire also fit into this concept of the Madonna. Hill wore a light blue skirt suit with a very high collar. While the skirt suit itself was conservative, showing that Hill was professional, reserved, and polite, it was also light blue. This color, which stood out when compared to the men in dark suits around her, also accented her appropriate femininity (see Appendix A). In an analysis of the language both Hill and

Thomas used during the hearing, Ragan points out that Hill's language was non-aggressive, passive, and self-preserving (38-9). Even when she was contradicted and questioned aggressively by Senators, she remained calm and was not accusatory toward anyone but Thomas. These vocal components, Ragan argues, illustrates the calm femininity of Hill's testimony. Thus, Hill's self-presentation of gender fit into this idea of an "acceptable" woman, a good woman, a sexually pure woman. While she may not have directly appealed to the image of the Madonna, especially consciously, given society's understanding of women as either Madonna or whore, her gender performance and its understanding situated her as a Madonna.

The way others portrayed Hill also supported this idea of the Madonna. Thomas' supporters staunchly portrayed Hill as having political motives, as accusing Thomas because she wanted, or possibly others wanted, Thomas' nomination to be rejected (Brock 108). Conclusions about Hill's reasoning for coming forward did not address Hill's sexuality, or posited that she was possibly responding due to sexual rejection by Thomas. This is significant because as a woman in the public eye, especially in terms of sexuality, she could easily be associated with the whore. Gamson argues that it is rare that a woman in the public eye will not be viewed as overtly sexual or hypersexual ("Jessica Hahn, media whore" 171). To achieve this vision of the Madonna, Gamson argues that someone must "demonstrate purity of motive, distance themselves from their bodies" ("Jessica Hahn, media whore" 171), or else they are "slotted into roles in which sexuality is their defining public feature and their economic means" ("Jessica Hahn, media whore" 171). Hill was able to do this effectively, and the testimony and arguments

of others also contributed to this view, so Hill's gender performance fit into society's framework of the Madonna.

Lewinsky, on the other hand, fulfilled the gendered framework of the whore. Lewinsky's self-presentation was not a strong area of focus within media reports, but her testimony and story did fit into this category of the whore. Through her eventual story and testimony, it was clear that Lewinsky was a very willing participant in the sex acts with President Clinton. In her conversations with Linda Tripp and her discussion with friends before and after the Clinton affair, Lewinsky wanted sex, and specifically extramarital sex with the president, a want too deviant to be considered appropriate gender performance by a sexually normative woman (Gallop and Berlant 254). Lewinsky's obvious willingness to participate in these sexual acts with Clinton linked her gender performance automatically with the whore. She was rooted in this concept, also through how others' portrayed her.

Taking off from Lewinsky's confessions, both in public and in her private (but taped) conversations with Linda Tripp, the media began to frame Lewinsky as the epitome of the stereotype of the whore. Mostly, the media began to focus on how Lewinsky's physical features made her an unacceptable woman – they wanted to show how her embodied performance as a woman linked her to this deviant category. The media portrayed Lewinsky as having an “erotic persona” (Garber 178). For example, a TIME magazine article opened with:

When Monica Lewinsky worked in the White House, she had nicknames. One was Elvira, after TV's vampy Mistress of the Dark--a snickering reference to Lewinsky's long and big black hair, her fondness for tight, chest-hugging outfits and her coquettish demeanor. Another sobriquet was the Stalker, inspired by her steadfast rush toward the presidential helicopter whenever its whirr announced a landing. (August et al 1)

Even when she tried to change her voice during the hearings from the “high pitched and breathy voice” in her conversations with Linda Tripp to one much more serious (Garber 180), her performance was still characterized as fitting into this whore idea through her “heavy makeup and semi-laquered hairdo” (Garber 180). By depicting Lewinsky with this exotic persona, she fit into the physical aspects of the whore. She was also said to have a “big mouth” (Garber 183), which continued to portray her as the inappropriate woman. By the media focusing on and othering Lewinsky’s physical appearance and persona, she was framed as an unacceptable woman. Between this bodily representation of Lewinsky and her willingness to participate in sexual acts, she fits into this frame of the whore.

Both Anita Hill and Monica Lewinsky, through self-presentation and portrayal by others, fit into this framework of the Madonna/whore dichotomy of gender performance. Hill, through presenting herself as the ideal for womanhood in America, and because those supporting Thomas mostly framed her as politically deviant, rather than attacking her sexuality, fits into the idea of the pure woman, the Madonna. Lewinsky, due to her own willingness to participate in sex, and because the media focused on her physical appearance as deviating from normative, feminine sexuality, fits into the whore side of the dichotomy. Thus, as Gamson says argues, the public perception of women in sex scandals is filled with these “flashing lights” of the Madonna/whore dichotomy (“Jessica Hahn, media whore” 171). Societal norms want to frame women in one of these two opposite roles – a woman, especially a woman involved in some kind of public sex, must fit into either the Madonna or the whore identity.

Clinton and Thomas: The boy and the man

Clinton and Thomas' gender performances during the sex scandals fit into a less theorized dichotomy: that of the boy and the man. While these two terms are, quite obviously, used in society to fit young males and then grown males, there is also a societal understanding of the connotations of these terms that has transferred into an understanding of masculine gender performance. Richard Hawley argues that "masculinity is best understood as a trajectory. In literature it is described as a journey or a quest" (17). The boy is destined to eventually become a man, just as the biological understanding of boys and men plays out in society. The boy is characterized in society as "rough" and "loud" (Burke 162). He is also characterized as "talkative, active, busy, peppy, and laughing" (Jones and Bayley 136) as well as being considered a "show off" (Jones and Bayley 137) and more deviant from rules than women (Jones and Bayley 136, 138). However, eventually, it is understood that this boy will become a man, who is more reserved and in control of his emotions (Jones and Bayley 136). Kivel argues that men are also understood as "tough" and "in control of their emotions" (3). As a KING magazine article suggests, while boys are supposed to be focused on sex, men grow into being more respectful of their partner's wishes and more reserved in their sexuality (3-4). However, as Hawley posits, it is possible that "manhood may be an illusion" (165). He argues that this manhood is an ideal that society holds up, but one that is very possibly not achievable. This is similar to the "pure white" ideology discussed in the last chapter about race. Society frames masculinity in terms of either being "boyish" or being a "man." "Grow up" and "act like a man" are commonly heard phrases when discussing masculinity, but is it possible for this ideal to ever actually be achieved? This does not

mean that someone cannot be called a man or famed as such, but rather that it is simply an ideal invoked as an example. The actuality of it, however, is possibly non-existent. Framing masculine behavior around this boy/man dichotomy posits that all “boys” have room for improvement and the mature man is the goal. Clinton and Thomas were framed within this light, Clinton as the boy who needed to mature and Thomas as the man who was dignified and set an example.

Clinton, after examining his gender performance and the media understanding of it during the scandal, is the epitome of what we understand the “boy” to be within societal norms. Clinton’s behavior is described as that of a “boy king” who is not quite old or mature enough to deal with his sexual desires in an appropriate manner (Miller 117). This concept of the “boy king” is one specifically rooted within white privilege. Only a white male could embody this “boy king” because of the racial stereotype that men of color, specifically black men, can never actually deserve the respect of the man category (Cross and Slater 1). Therefore, they are “boys” in a diminutive sense, and thus not possibly “boy kings.” This concept of the “boy king” fits into this idea that even though Clinton is president, he does not perform his gender in a way that meets up to, or really even comes close to, this ideal of the man. Willis argues that this fits because Clinton was never good at embodying the presidential image that is idealized (243). Part of this is because Clinton is not seen as dominant. He is still the boy who deviates from the rules, but is not the in control man that Kivel talks about. In analyzing the scandal, Miller argues that Clinton was not aggressive or dominant in either his testimony about the affair with Lewinsky, or in the actual sex acts he was describing (118). Clinton, instead of being seen as this dominant ideal president, was rather seen as the

“embodiment of youth and eroticism” (Willis 243). While he was not always seen as deviant in a bad way, in an interview with Jane Gallop, Lauren Berlant argued that Clinton seemed to be understood as having “a secret life” so that he was a good boy in public and a bad boy in private (249) – however, no matter if he was being good or bad, he was always the boy. Clinton also was framed as the boy in that he did not admit to his mistakes until he was caught lying (Willis 240). This idea, very reminiscent of the small boy caught with his hand in the cookie jar, framed Clinton as the boy who would not take responsibility for his actions, rather than the man who would. While this means Clinton has some of the negative traits of boyhood, like not being dominant or responsible, it also comes with the naiveté of boyhood. Societal understanding grants that eventually, Clinton will turn into a man. While no one may consciously think that Clinton will outgrow the sexual deviancy evidenced during the affair with Lewinsky, as Hawley argues, it is an ideal they are subconsciously holding onto. Therefore, there seems to be a certain amount of forgiveness for Clinton’s actions due to this concept of his boyishness. Thus, Clinton’s lack of dominance and responsibility, coupled with this idea of forgiveness, creates the image of the boy in gender performance.

In contrast to Clinton’s boyishness, Thomas associates himself and is framed by others as achieving this high status of the man. Thomas is characterized as the “ideal chivalric American gentleman” (Robinson and Powell 283), discussed as someone who embodies those things we consider as the epitome of the positive masculine. During his testimony, Thomas described himself as living up to this American dream of the man. He discussed enjoying going to McDonald’s and watching his kid play football (Robinson and Powell 286). He wanted others to see him as this perfect man. Part of this was

displaying his enjoyment of these “masculine” activities. He also used his language to appear masculine. He was confrontational in the way he addressed Hill’s charges, which is considered, culturally, to be a masculine trait (Ragan 27). Thomas’ testimony also included asserting that he was completely against sexual harassment and had been in all of his work, and therefore he could not possibly have done something like this.

Therefore, Thomas presented his life and his sexuality as fitting with this societal concept of the man. He used aggressive language to show dominance, but at the same time did not lose control. He showed responsibility in how he said he reacted toward Hill, that he never discussed anything sexual in nature with her. Thomas attempted to present himself as this ideal man, the embodiment of maturity and masculinity. He appealed to this “ideal” that Hawley talks about, attempting to prove that he had achieved it.

One distinct qualification necessary in this discussion of boy and man is how race, specifically discussions about blackness, influences this discussion. There is a history within American culture of calling grown black men “boys” as a way of denigrating them, a way of making them seem less than white men and women (Cross and Slater 1). This concept of the boy was not at all redeeming, and, in direct contrast to the idea that all boys eventually become men, it is not is not changeable. Clinton, because of his white privilege, is able to employ the “boy” identity and still be a successful politician. His white privilege allows him to be the mischievous boy who will one day grow into a man, who will grow out of his deviancy. This is different from the “boy” label that African-Americans are given. They are considered always the boys, always deviant. Thomas’ ability to be defined as a man is a change from American historical patterns. His identification *and* recognition as the responsible, mature man gave him the ability to be a

credible testifier, a credible individual, to the greater American public. As the “boy” label applied to African-American males indicates, many blacks in America have been denied agency, denied rights, and denied life because they were not viewed as equal to white *men*, not viewed as ever going to be equal to being a man. Clinton, however, is not as harmed by this label of boy. His whiteness allows this label to not be damning, unlike its use on members of another race.

Thomas and Clinton both fit into different sides of the masculine gender performance dichotomy of the boy and the man. Thomas, through his display of responsibility, masculine interests, and domination, fit into the idea of the mature man. Clinton, due to his lack of responsibility, his lack of aggression, and his sexual deviancy fits into this idea of the boy. Understanding their participation in sex scandals in these terms helps make sense of how men’s sexual deviancy is understood. Clinton’s sexual deviancy is forgivable because he is still a boy. Thomas is a man, so he could not have participated in such an act. Society frames men in terms of this “maturity” continuum, yet it is debatable whether or not men can ever reach this perfect man state. Thomas arguably said he had, and the idea seemed to work. However, appealing to an ideal does not necessarily make it achievable. Similar to the idea of the pure white, the man is an ideal that is used to perpetuate the idea of normative sexuality and “good” behavior in men. However, because the boy/man dichotomy is understood as also a continuum, categorization as a boy, for individuals who are white, does not seem to be extremely harmful or extremely detrimental to a politician’s social and political status.

Conclusions: Framing Men and Women

The media framed both the men and women involved in these sex scandals in some kind of a dichotomy. Hill and Lewinsky had to be framed in this Madonna/whore idea, while Clinton and Thomas fit into this idea of the boy and the man. What do these frameworks tell us about how society understands gender performance? Gender is seen as a way to control others – by creating labels like Madonna/whore and boy/man, society has a subtle way of shepherding individual behavior to make it more normative. By being labeled a whore, a woman is told that she is acting in an inappropriate manner. Phrases like “be a man” have similar effects on those who are labeled as the “boy.” By creating these ideals, society frames everything in comparison to them, and everything works around these standards.

The two standards present in these scandals, however, show that societal frameworks are different for men and women. The Madonna/whore dichotomy presents women as opposed to one another. One must either be the Madonna or the whore, and while there is this concept of the fallen Madonna, the construction of this dichotomy not only separates women into two distinct categories, but it situates these categories as antithetical to each other. This creates a framework in which women are supposed to be against each other, rather than being members of the same community. They are constructed as higher and lower; the concept is a vertical one. The frame is also extremely static. There is not supposed to be much movement between the two categories. There might be that fallen Madonna, or even more rarely, the whore who “makes good,” but in general the categories are considered constant. In contrast to the way this dichotomy works, the boy/man dichotomy presents itself as more of a

continuum, except when it is racially charged. While the label of boy is supposed to change behavior, it is to get a masculine individual to “grow up,” to become what they, inevitably, are assumed to become. Also in the idea of this continuum is that white men are all together. Theoretically, all men were at some point boys – they have all been through these steps. Therefore, they can help one another, work together, and live in a community. This is more of a horizontal dichotomy that allows a cohesiveness of the masculine gender performance. This dichotomy, however, is heavily weighted with the idea of race. Thomas could not have been labeled a boy and come out as successfully as he did from this scandal. The history of African-American men being called “boys” shows how the ability to identify as the boy, and still grow into the man, is an idea linked to white privilege. These subtle differences in the way men and women are categorized shows how society frames women in a strong way against each other, separating women, whereas society gives men a more understated dichotomy within which to work.

Another factor that might seem odd in how these dichotomies played out in both sex scandals is that Anita Hill and Clarence Thomas, both of the African-American individuals in these scandals, were constructed by society in what is considered the “better” category of the dichotomy. For both individuals, a lot of this construction was due to self-presentation. They appealed to the idea of the politics of respectability. If, going into the public eye, both Hill and Thomas were aware of the stereotypes of African-American individuals, and combating these stereotypes had been a concept discussed among the African-American community throughout their lives, then it would not be surprising that their self-presentation was wary of rejecting those stereotypes. Clinton and Lewinsky would not have had that politics of respectability discourse as part

of their racial histories, and therefore, they would not consciously be depicting themselves as separate from these stereotypes. Therefore, the racial framework of society greatly influences the gendered framework society tries to impose.

The gender performance during these two scandals illustrates how society tends to frame women in terms of the sexually pure and the sexually deviant, allowing only that sexuality to figure into their label, while men are categorized as to how “mature” they are on a growing scale, but with the redeeming factor that they will eventually become the ideal. These differences show how society has different expectations for men and women. Men are expected to be part of a community, to assist one another, whereas women are pitted against one another, dividing them into different groups. Gender performance in the public eye, as Gamson argues, is always full of these “flashing lights” that actors must perform under. As Thomas and Hill show, sometimes a stronger awareness of those lights can create a situation in which an actor is more in control of self-presentation, but they are always working within these societal given frames. Gender performance is divided into dichotomies, so society can understand the “good” and “bad” woman, and examine the “young” and “mature” man.

What Makes an American: Political Citizenship and Affiliation

In addition to race and gender, one other issue that impacts these two sex scandals is the American political system. Political action in the United States is viewed as probably the biggest way a citizen can be involved in democracy. Voting and participating within the political process is viewed as the ultimate act of citizenship. However, a look through American history reveals that this aspect of citizenship has been limited. Only certain Americans have been allowed to participate. The Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution, ratified in 1870, requires the states allow all men, regardless of race or previous employment condition (i.e. slavery), to vote (U.S. Const. Am. 15). Until this point, voting was restricted to white men. While this did not actually immediately take practical effect if we look at things like Jim Crowe laws, and still does not affect certain people today in relation to immigration status, it did begin a process of incorporating men of color into the political citizenry. It was not until 1920, with the ratification of the 19th Amendment, that this right was also extended to women (U.S. Const. Am 19). Thus, political citizenship for all people is a relatively recent phenomenon in the United States. Due to this history, there are still some ideas in the United States that these people, people of color and women, specifically, do not deserve the same amount of political citizenship. Society can see this in the demographic make-up of members of Congress and the Executive Branch. For example, there have only been six African-Americans to ever serve in the U.S. Senate (Ethnic Diversity), while only 17 of the 100 members of current Senate are women (Women). Just because members of certain demographic groups are allowed to vote, this does not mean they are fully allowed to have political citizenship. "Citizenship" here has a complicated definition not

entirely related to actual national citizenship. It often “depends upon the willingness of the majority to acknowledge [minorities] as members [of society]” (Phelan 139).

Politically, citizenship many times constructs the “modern political constructions of the ‘we,’ its parameters and limits describe the polity’s sense of itself” (Phelan 140).

Citizenship describes who the “we” are in the United States. Participation within political society, thus being included in that “we” of politics, is largely based around being recognized as a member of political society. As we will see with the two sex scandals, sometimes people are deemed not acceptable for full political citizenship, and they are framed in such a way that their political agency is limited.

Another important aspect of politics in the United States, and a way political citizenship is recognized, is political affiliation. While there are countless political parties in the United States, two have dominated modern American history and are the main affords of political citizenship: Democratic and Republican. Democrats tend to be associated with more liberal policies, while Republicans with more conservative ones. Norms within society dictate that “most” Republicans are conservative and “most” Democrats are liberal, both in regards to fiscal and social ideas. The relation of these two political parties to sex scandals has a long history. Both have experienced quite a few sex scandals, and both parties have tried to use society’s view of them to minimize the detrimental effects of these scandals.

There have long been associations between political leaning and sexual activity. The general idea is that liberal political affiliation is associated with more “liberal” sexuality, or non-normative (outside of heterosexual marriage for non-reproductive purposes) sexual acts. This may partially be due to the fact that some identities that are

formed around non-normative sexualities (gay and lesbian, specifically) are defended by the Democratic Party (D'Emilio 239). In addition, the Democratic Party often supports more comprehensive sex education, which many associate with more “promiscuous” sex (Mauldon and Luker 1). In contrast, Republicans support quite a few conservative pieces of legislation that focus on limiting sexual activity and encouraging sexual conservatism (Rubin 148). These associations with political party platforms lead to an extension into people’s personal political lives. Thus, people assume that if someone is a politically liberal public figure, then that person will have a liberal sex life.

This theory is also discussed around conservative political individuals. For example, in his book *Tearoom Trade*, Laud Humphreys discusses gay male sexual interactions in public spaces. In his chapter “The Breastplate of Righteousness” he explains how gay men often would don extremely conservative personalities, especially political personalities, to hide their sexual “deviance” (137). This indicates how the conservative political outside may be a label to hide behind when one participates in sexually deviant acts. This link provides insight into how the media may frame sex scandals. Until one is proven, the conservative political affiliation seems to serve as a kind of protection for participants. Being publically labeled a conservative may be a defense from sex scandal allegations.

Thus, liberal and conservative politics are specifically linked to sex scandals in different ways; however, both provide a kind of shield for sex scandal participants. Liberal politics is associated with liberal sexuality, which some argue means liberal politicians are less punished when they are caught in sex scandals. Conservatives are associated with a conservative sexuality, which usually means they can hide behind that

screen unless it is extremely apparent they have participated in a sex scandal. During the time the two sex scandals addressed in this thesis occurred, both political parties' experiences with these discourses formed norms around how society viewed political participants in sex scandals. Also, these perceptions were greatly influenced by how much political citizenship the media and viewers thought should be given to different participants. By examining each of the four individuals involved in these two sex scandals, it becomes apparent that both political leaning and allocations of political citizenship are at play in our understanding of the political world.

Clarence Thomas: A Conservative Through – and – Through

In the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas sex scandal, Thomas' extremely conservative political stance came into play at his defense. Just as theoretically espoused, Thomas' political life was linked to a reserved view of his sex life. Partially this came through in disbelief about his possible involvement in a sex scandal, but it also came through as the opinion that people should not be discussing his sex life. Anita Hill's accusations against Clarence Thomas came as a shock to many people. Thomas had been doing very well during the nomination hearing, and an accusation against someone with, as many argued, an upstanding character came as a surprise. Obviously a political conservative, Thomas' political leaning did have an effect on the way this story was framed, the way he asserted himself, and the way his supporters testified about him.

Thomas had a long history in the conservative movement. As discussed in the introduction, a large reason he was nominated to the Supreme Court was because of his traditional viewpoints in many areas of politics. He was seen as moderate on Civil Rights,

and opposed to “extremism” within the movement (Phelps and Winternitz 46). This came through in the descriptions of him, both in the media and in testimonies from friends. In one *New York Times* piece, the author focused strongly on how witnesses for Thomas focused on his upstanding character, how Thomas’ friends said he was an honorable gentleman, who would never consider participating in a sexual harassment like this (Mauro 1). Thus, his conservative politics were linked with a traditionalist personality, which made it seem impossible for him to actually be part of such a scandal.

Another important aspect of the political implications during Thomas’ hearing is arguments from many people that there should be no discussion of Thomas’ potential sex acts, and rather that this should be solely focused on his credentials to be a Supreme Court Justice. Grindstaff argues that many media arguments held that addressing Thomas’ sexuality was inappropriate. It was bringing black male sexuality into politics again, a racist strategy, and that there should be no focus on Thomas’ sexuality due to this history (37). This is complicated, because the case originated out of charges of sexual harassment. Therefore, many argued that the case had little to do with sex, but wanted to only focus on the power dynamics of the harassment. If the situation were really framed in terms of Thomas’ abuse of power, as harassment implies, it would be problematic to his appointment as a Supreme Court Justice, and arguably extremely relevant. I believe the reason the power dynamics of this discussion were silenced is two-fold. One, American culture is very uncomfortable with discussing harassment. While harassment is a very wide-spread occurrence, reporting about harassment is hugely underrepresented, one study saying that only about 1%-7% of harassments actually become public (Charney

and Russell 1). This silence in American culture about harassment makes it difficult to talk about, especially in such a public venue as a Senate confirmation hearing.

The second part of this is that sexual harassment is still about sex. As Christine Littleton argues, there is a myth that without physical contact there is not such thing as sexual harassment (1423). However, this myth is not true – sexual harassment can be entirely verbal, but it is still about sex (Littleton 1423). Given the discomfort with bringing up harassment, and given that it was still related to sex, sex became the main focus of the conversation. Some of the things Hill alleged were so graphic in their nature, it became much easier for the media to sensationalize and focus on this part, rather than the taboo subject of harassment. They framed everything in terms of sex, and there was little discussion about the power dynamics of the relationship. This change in focus allowed people to talk about sex, and how it was inappropriate to discuss surrounding Thomas' political life. However, this meant that the power dynamics were not addressed during the trial. The assumption that did occur about how Thomas' sex life was unnecessary to the confirmation hearings links the idea that there is a kind of disconnect between our political citizenship and sex lives. People did not want to focus on Thomas' sex life, because they said this was unrelated to his political ability to serve as a Supreme Court Justice. Sexual deviancy, here in Thomas' case, is arguably permissible, as long as it does not affect this public ability. This reasoning illustrates the complicated relationship society has between public and private sex, especially when linked to political leaning.

While Thomas' political association was used in his defense against Hill's charges, the politics of the situation in general caused many to argue sex had nothing to

do with it. This illustrates how societal norms frame politics within the public sphere, while sex, and especially sexual harassment, should be kept in the private sphere.

However, this does not keep those norms from influencing how we view someone's sexuality. This complicated relationship between political leaning, public assumptions, and private sex life illustrate how the public sees sex as omnipresent, but at the same time as a shameful act that should be quieted. Thomas' political leaning influenced his defense against these charges, but at the same time there was a belief that his sex life should not be involved in the discussion at all. His political citizenship did not depend upon his sex life, it was an independent variable given to him here. When comparing this to other individuals involved in these sex scandals, however, this illustrates some of the ways political citizenship is allocated in American society.

Anita Hill: Pawn of Others

Anita Hill's supposed political bias was brought into the discussion surrounding her accusations against Thomas, but not in the same way Thomas' was. There has been little information published about Hill's actual political leaning. However, during the confirmation hearings, and in the conclusions that have been posted since, beliefs about Hill's political leaning have been cited as a motive for her allegations. As Brock concludes in his book *The Real Anita Hill*, he believes Hill was a pawn of liberal conspirators to keep Clarence Thomas from being confirmed to the Supreme Court. This stripping of Hill's agency was a common thread in interpretations of her politics and how they influenced the scandal.

During the trial, Hill was not given her political agency. Thomas' supporters made this argument that liberal Senators and others who opposed Thomas' appointment were using Hill as a pawn to keep Thomas from being confirmed (Robinson and Powell 295). While Hill's supporters and friends claimed that Hill was not doing this for liberal aims (Squitieri and Pesce 1), many still came to this conclusion. In the aftermath of the hearings, just as Brock's book suggests, this rumor continued to spread. Hill was considered not necessarily left-of-center herself, but linked with others who were. This issue is still present today in discussions surrounding Anita Hill. Clarence Thomas wrote an autobiography that included descriptions of Anita Hill, which she has protested. In a *New York Times* op-ed, Anita Hill clarifies that she was a conservative, religious woman whom Thomas even recommended to a religious university (Hill 1). In his book, however, Thomas claims this is not the kind of woman she was—he situates her as non-religious, and arguably from that point, more amoral (Hill 1). This limitation of Hill's agency is key to how political affiliation and citizenship worked in this situation.

Another important aspect in the scandal where Hill was treated differently than Thomas was the discussion of sex. As discussed in the previous chapter, Hill's sex life was not attacked to a great extent during the trial. However, unlike arguments surrounding Thomas' sex life, no one advocated for not focusing on Hill's sex life. Those saying that sex was an inappropriate discussion during this hearing tied the sex acts only to Thomas. There was never any discussion about how it was inappropriate to attach Hill's name to sex or to the harassment here. As Gamson argues in "Jessica Hahn, media whore," women in sex scandals are automatically operating in lights where their sexuality is in front of everyone (171). In this case, Hill's attachment to a sex scandal rendered her

automatically in those public sex lights, and therefore inappropriate for political citizenship.

The assumption that Hill's political leaning was strongly controlled by others is in direct contrast to how Thomas' political leaning affected the outcome. For one, Hill was not afforded direct political citizenship. Her political citizenship was never actually hers, it was given to others to construct around her. Secondly, her political leaning was associated with guilt in bringing about these charges. It was assumed that the liberal reasoning behind her accusations (though it was not her own), was merely a political strategic ploy to keep Thomas from being nominated. Not only was her political citizenship stripped from her directly, the political leaning that was assigned to her was used to implicate her reasons behind her accusations. When compared later with Lewinsky's political leaning, this illustrates a common thread in how women involved in sex scandals are allotted political citizenship (or rather, are not).

Bill Clinton – Liberal Politics, Liberal Sex

Bill Clinton, a Democratic president, was obviously associated with liberal politics during his presidency. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, that political association leads to an automatic connection to a more non-normative sexual life. This assumption was greatly buoyed by Clinton's past involvement in sex scandals (see introduction). Therefore, Clinton's affair with Lewinsky was not viewed in itself as much of a surprise; however, lying under oath was a large factor in why Clinton's sexual deviancy was dragged in front of the public during the scandal. Looking at the way liberal political affiliation was associated with Clinton's sex life, in addition to looking at

how the main focus of the scandal was on Clinton's lying under oath instead of the sexual "deviancy" of his affair illustrates a similar relationship to political citizenship that Thomas experienced. In both scandals, a lot of critics argued that it was unnecessary to focus on Clinton's and Thomas' sex lives because they were not related to their political performance in these situations.

Clinton's actions were excused by many, arguably because of his liberal politics, which were linked to his liberal sexuality. In a *New York Times* article, Donna Greene argues that polls showed that the public, while they thought Clinton's sexual actions were incorrect, were basically excusable and did not warrant such a scandal (1). Again, in *Defending the American Presidency* Busby argues that Clinton escaped major ramifications of the affair (196) and that he was not actually blamed for the affair (26). This idea espouses the argument that Clinton, while he definitely suffered consequences of his sexual actions, was not as "socially" punished as he possibly could have been. While it definitely had an impact on his reputation, his political career was not ended or significantly harmed by the Lewinsky affair. In a news article from Canada, Tracinski argues that Clinton was able to escape punishment because of his Democratic politics and his association with liberal organizations that are willing to forgive him (1). This article shows an outside perspective looking in on American politics to give a broader understanding of how this scandal was understood nationwide and by the rest of the world. This association between Clinton's politics and an excuse for his actions illustrates how liberal political affiliations are used as an explanation in sex scandals to protect from labels of extreme deviant sexuality.

Another aspect of Clinton's sexuality in relation to the sex scandal was the lack of focus on the actual sex. Almost every book, article, and essay on the Clinton/Lewinsky scandal argues that the main issue was not the sex in question, but rather the issue of Clinton lying under oath (Busby 69, Kenski 248). This lack of focus, and the argument many made that Clinton's sexuality should be ignored, especially if he had not lied under oath, illustrates how, similar to Thomas, Clinton's sex life was not viewed as something necessary for his political citizenship. His function at the highest level of political citizenship, that of president, many were arguing, was separate from his sexual practices. This, just as with Thomas, illustrates the complexity of American understanding of masculine sexuality and citizenship. As discussed in the previous chapter, men are expected to want to have sex. While this sex is supposed to be rooted in heterosexual monogamy, there is a certain amount of sexual deviancy allowed for men in the public sphere. Society would like to keep that sexuality private, but it is not enough to strip a man of his political citizenship.

Clinton's political associations and the reaction to his sexuality in relation to the sex scandal illustrate the way political citizenship works for liberals as well as for men. Democratic public figures, because of an association with more left-of-center policies and life, are considered liberal sexually. Thus, when they are accused of sex acts outside of monogamous marriage, a trait seen as inherently liberal, it is more excusable than when conservatives are accused of the same thing. However, just as with conservatives, for Clinton there was a move to not focus on his sexuality. This phenomenon that exists for Clinton and Thomas illustrates a certain kind of divide within the American psyche between political citizenship and men's sexuality.

Monica Lewinsky: “Presidential Kneepads” and nothing more

Lewinsky’s political affiliations were discussed the least among the four participants in these two scandals. While she was a political intern in the White House when she first began her sex acts with President Clinton, there was almost no discussion of her political thoughts, beliefs, or motives. As many people began to say, Lewinsky had come to Washington to seduce the president, and for no other reason. People argued that Lewinsky only had the job and career she did because of her sexuality, and there was often no mention of her political purposes in being at the White House. By presenting Lewinsky as strictly a sexual being, the media stripped her of her political agency.

In many news articles, Monica Lewinsky’s sex life, with the president and before, was the main focus. For example, in a *Daily News* article by Yglesias and Pienciak, they discuss her sexual history, in detail. The article lists every man she might have had an affair with, including specific devotion to an affair she allegedly had with a high school teacher when she was 16 (1). There was not this much mention of any of the other individual’s sex lives. They discuss how when Lewinsky was a young teenager she liked to “handcuff [her boyfriend] to the bedpost” (1), and how Lewinsky was known to stalk certain partners (1). In one of the few articles that did mention her political affiliation as a Democrat, an article in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, her ambitions were mentioned specifically in relation to sex, and it was strongly suggested that she only received the positions she did because of sex with others (Parker and Leinwand 1). Lewinsky’s political life was completely or almost totally ignored in the media – instead there was only a focus on her sexuality.

This focus on Lewinsky's sex life, while it does remove her political agency, is also important in comparison with the other individuals involved in these two sex scandals. Like Hill, there was no media outcry about the discussion of her sex life. Quite the contrary, the media focused almost solely on her sex life. This shows how comfortable the media and the public were with thinking about Lewinsky's sex life. There is a similarity here between Hill and Lewinsky – the media and society did not denounce the focus on their sex lives or involvement in the sex scandals. There were no outcries against their names being associated with sex. There is also a connection between them and the lack of political citizenship allotted to them. For Thomas and Clinton, instead, there is a focus on avoiding discussion of their sex lives, and allowing them greater political citizenship. This seems to illustrate how gender affects both public sex and political citizenship. Women are more associated with sex scandals in a kind of blame-worthy way. There was no effort to disassociate Hill and Lewinsky from the sex scandals, and they were also both stripped of political citizenship. In contrast, both men were distanced from the sex acts and given greater political citizenship. Thus, there is a connection in society's discomfort with public sex and politics, but an effort to eliminate this with men in sex scandals, but not women.

By completely ignoring Lewinsky's possible political beliefs and reasons for being in Washington, just as happened with Hill, but in some ways even more pronounced, Lewinsky was not treated as a political citizen. Unlike Clinton her liberal connection did nothing to excuse her sexuality; instead it was barely mentioned. Also, unlike both Clinton and Thomas, no one wanted to keep her sexuality out of the public sphere, no one seemed to think that it was an inappropriate topic of conversation. When

taking her experiences with Hill's in these sex scandals, we can see how women involved in sex scandals are not allowed political citizenship in the United States at this time.

Conclusions

Looking at these two scandals through a lens influenced by the political systems in the United States provides valuable insights about societal frames of understanding surrounding both political ideologies and political citizenship. Both scandals illustrate certain similarities between Thomas and Hill and then Clinton and Lewinsky, pointing to certain frames common for liberals and conservatives. However, there are also strong similarities between Clinton and Thomas and then Hill and Lewinsky, showing a similarity in political citizenship frames as they are associated with gender. In looking at political implications during these two scandals, there are certain ways society uses liberal and conservative ideologies to frame their ideas on sex scandals, and there are also suggestions as to whom Americans consider appropriate political citizens.

In terms of liberal and conservative ideologies, while there were some differences, both ideologies served in the same kind of way. One distinct difference here is that the media was much more willing to talk about the sex life of both liberal participants (Clinton and Lewinsky). Clinton's sexual history had been detailed due to the different sex scandals he was involved in, while Lewinsky sex acts throughout her life were announced in gross detail to the public in the media. In contrast, the media strongly limited discussions of Thomas and Hill's sex lives. This difference is related to the social association between political ideologies and personal sex life. However, while this difference remains pronounced, it seems that for Clinton and Thomas, both conservative

and liberal affiliation served as a kind of defense against sex scandal allegations. For Thomas, it was assumed that his conservatism meant he was less likely to be guilty of Hill's accusations. For Clinton, his liberalism offered a kind of excuse for his sexual actions. This illustrates that sex scandals are unavoidable for either political party. Therefore, each one must determine a way to deal with them. At the time of these two scandals, the Conservative defense and the Liberal excuse seem to illustrate greater society's understanding of the influential role these policies have on personal life, and how they shape and frame our understanding of any political public figure.

Another very important conclusion this study illustrates is how we understand political citizenship in relation to gender. Political citizenship is afforded to those we consider able to have some say in the way our country governs. It would be antiquated to try and say this excludes all women – we have women in Congress, women in the Cabinet. However, these two scandals illustrate that women must be seen as separate from sex to be afforded political citizenship. Hill and Lewinsky both had their names attached to public sex scandals. While Hill, as discussed in the previous chapter, was considered largely sexually pure in the scandal, her name was still associated with sex. Society's discomfort with women's sexuality takes form in the way both of these women were denied political citizenship. While both men in this case were associated with sex in some way, society still saw them as fit to receive political affiliation, political beliefs. For Lewinsky and Hill, however, being a woman *and* having their names associated with sex was enough to eliminate them from the political world.

One caveat related to citizenship necessary in this conclusion is about race. America has a long history of denying political citizenship to people of color, especially

African-Americans. However, in this chapter I have largely presented Thomas as receiving full political citizenship, irrespective of race. I think two things are at play here that influence this outcome. First, both of these scandals were intraracial. Due to the racial homogeneity of each scandal, there is no interracial interplay that would be one way to illustrate how political citizenship works for these relationships. Second, as discussed in the first chapter, Thomas presented himself in such a way that he was above race, almost de-raced. By doing so, he made his ties with the black man “unfit for citizenship” as slight as possible; by also having a Republican affiliation, he made that distance even more pronounced. Through a combination of both of these things, racial delineations about political citizenship were difficult to understand. However, that does not mean they were not extremely present and at play in these political scandals. For example, what if Hill were a white woman accusing Thomas? Would he have still received the same amount of political citizenship? Or if Thomas were a white man? Would Hill’s allegations have been given as much credit as they were? The racial understandings of political citizenship are never absent, but in these two cases they are more difficult to understand.

One comparison that does indicate how race inflects political citizenship is a comparison between Clinton and Thomas. Thomas was completely distanced from sex during his and Hill’s scandal. While partially this seems related to his political affiliation, as was discussed in the chapter about race, he was also distanced from sex because of the African-American stereotype about deviant sexuality. This shows how, while Thomas was given political citizenship in this instance, the outcome could have been very different if he was found guilty by society of this sexual association. If he was, he very

possibly would have been associated with that black man “unfit for citizenship,” and thus he would not have been given as much political citizenship. For Clinton, and arguably due to his white privilege, it was not as problematic for his political citizenship to be implicated in a sex scandal.

Politics greatly influenced these two sex scandals, both in terms of political party and a larger understanding of politics in America. Political parties are one of the biggest ways Americans identify with the political system, and their importance obviously has an influence on the way we view political participation. However, what these scandals also show is that these parties additionally influence the way we interpret and understand individuals and their private actions. Finally, political citizenship, being granted the right to be a political citizen, is considered vital to being American. In these two scandals, however, we can see that political citizenship is not always granted. Women associated with sex are not given this political right, and oftentimes race is also used as a category of citizenship exclusion. Politics in the United States has a great influence in how we understand ourselves, how we understand others, and how we view the political system. As both of these sex scandals illustrate, sex is very much still politics.

Conclusion

In these past three chapters, I have attempted to point out, by critically analyzing the race, gender, and political frameworks of the Clarence Thomas-Anita Hill and Bill Clinton-Monica Lewinsky sex scandals, how society frames and understands the self and other, the ideal and the “deviant” around these three categories. Conclusions drawn from examination of these scandals are explicitly rooted in the time period over which these scandals took place; however, their lessons are not limited to these time frames. While more events may have occurred that show different or changed norms and frames within society, the conclusions around these two sex scandals illustrate norms within society, which have a permeating, long-lasting effect on societal consciousness. The media- and self-framing that occurred throughout these two scandals illustrate the norms that function in society surrounding issues of race, gender, and politics in American culture.

In terms of race, these two scandals illustrate the complex relationship America has with its past of racial inequality. While the blatant “on-the-books” discrimination against African-Americans has diminished in society, the way Thomas, Hill, Clinton, and Lewinsky were racially framed during these scandals illustrate that an understanding of white as right, and racial inferiority are still dominant concepts in American culture. There appears to be a category of the “pure white,” which is an ideal that all races and ethnicities should be trying to achieve. We can see this in Thomas’ appeal to characterize himself as “above” other African-Americans such as his sister (Painter 203). Hill is characterized as devoid of race and a traitor to the race in an attempt to strip her of agency and identity, and to thus discredit her story (Painter 205). It is also understood that in this “pure white” category, there can be no sexual deviancy. That is why Clinton

and Lewinsky were racially othered in such a way that their “whiteness” was no longer just white – Clinton became “white trash,” (McElya 157) Lewinsky became an exotic gypsy (Garber 205), and thus were both removed from this privileged category in a way to keep the racial hierarchical understanding in place. The “pure white” category was upheld throughout these scandals, even though the situation itself (two African-Americans both largely viewed as sexually normative and pure, and two white individuals accepted as sexually deviant) would seem antithetical to this conclusion.

With respect to gender performance, the media framing of these individuals illustrates a strong understanding of two dichotomies into which all members, especially public members, of society must fit. Women fit into this understanding of the Madonna or the whore. The Madonna, the sexually pure, is the “appropriate” woman, while the whore, the sexually deviant, is the one society must regulate or ostracize (Conrad 310). Hill was largely treated as a Madonna. No attacks on her sexual life or character were strong enough to stay part of the discussion around the scandal for long, and she presented herself in as upright a way as possible (Robinson and Powell 238, Crenshaw 407). In contrast, Lewinsky’s sexual character was constantly at the front of the media, her sex practices, sex interests, and sexual desires were open for everyone to disdain (August et al 1). This construction of women as opposites, and thus against each other, reveals a societal norm about women as against rather than with one another. For men, however, the dichotomy seems to be more a continuum – that of the boy to the man. Men are supposed to fit into this ideal of the man eventually, but less mature men are “boys,” a redeemable quality that allows forgiveness of some deviant behavior. However, this characterization is largely based on racial privilege. Thomas, through self and media

framing as an upstanding gentleman, was able to fit into the man side of this dichotomy. Clinton, through media representation as a boy, was excused from some of the harsher judgments; he was the mischievous boy. However, due to racial history, this concept of the man and the boy is much more complicated. Given the use of the racial epithet of “boy” applied to African-American men (Cross and Slater 1), it is arguably impossible for men of color, specifically African-American men, to embody this category of the “redeemable” boy. This category can only be occupied by white men. Being able to embody the forgivable boy is something only possible through white privilege. A black man would not have this same ability.

Looking at society’s understanding of politics, these scandals reveal some lessons about political citizenship and whom we think has a right to make political decisions in society. The fact that both women in these two scandals were not allotted political citizenship by the media illustrates a certain undercurrent of understanding that women, specifically women involved in sex, are not supposed to be involved in politics. Given the number of women involved in the American political system today, it would be incorrect to assert that women in general cannot be involved in the political process. However, women attached to sex, and likely other “deviant” categories, are still deemed inappropriate for politics. This is because any woman attached to sex, even if it is in a Madonna way (as with Hill) is still largely associated with sex (Gamson, “Jessica Hahn” 171). A different, yet at the same time akin, relationship occurs between men and politics. There still seems to be a societal discomfort with sex and politics, irrespective of someone’s gender. However, for men, this discomfort manifests itself in terms of silence. Discussions surrounding both Clinton and Thomas focused on the fact that these scandals

were not actually about sex and that sex, and these men's sex lives, should not be a part of political discussion (Busby 69, Kenski 248, Grindstaff 37). Society has a great problem linking political actors and sex; with women, however, the problem seems to lie with the women themselves. For men, though, this means the sex itself must be removed. This difference implies that men are inherently considered more appropriate for politics. Men are supposed to occupy the political arena, and sexual deviancy, while negative, does not have to be completely avoided, just hidden. Instead, with women, any association with sex, be it Madonna or whore, is still so negative that those women are discouraged to participate in the political system. Therefore, deep down, this reveals an overall societal preference for men in politics.

The conclusions drawn around these two scandals are meant to illustrate an understanding of society during the 1990s, the times during which these scandals occurred. While the norms they invoke and the theory they are based in have a deeply historic root and implications for society today, the media framing and societal understanding of Hill, Thomas, Clinton, and Lewinsky, is rooted around where sex scandal understandings were in the 1990s. These things have likely changed in the last ten years, and will continue to change as sex scandals pervade society. For example, Thomas' lack of appeal to forgiveness and religious authority may seem odd given the climate around similar scandals today. Partially this is due to the fact that, unlike many of these more modern scandals, given the he-said, she-said nature of the Thomas hearing, it would be almost impossible to prove whether what Hill alleged was true. However, since the early 1990s, there have been many religious figures involved in sex scandals, which has popularized the use of asking for religious forgiveness. Made famous by Jimmy

Swaggart in the 1980s (King 1), this became much more popular and mainstream in the 2000s by religious leaders such as Ted Haggard and Joe Barron. In response to this, it seems to have become more popular for conservative political figures, like Mark Sanford, to ask for forgiveness and invoke their religious background as a way to save political careers. More research should be done into how more recent religious sex scandals have influenced political scandals today. This might give more information on societal norms in the 2000s. However, the limits of this thesis are during the 1990s, and hopefully provide insight into media framing and societal norms at that time.

These conclusions hopefully open a window to view how societal norms impact framings and understandings of race, gender, and the American political system. What this paper also hopefully illustrates is that these things are all intertwined. It is impossible to analyze race without seeing gender, gender without politics, politics without race, and so on. These things are all intertwined; intersectionality is an inevitability whenever looking at any frame or norm in American culture (Collins 63). And race, gender, and politics are not the only factors. Class, education, age, and countless other factors influence our daily framing and understanding of the self and the other. By examining these more critically, however, I have hoped to shed light on the inequalities and oppressions that some of these frames cause. The Hill-Thomas and Lewinsky-Clinton scandals illustrate societal norms in place during this time, many of which still persist today. By recognizing these norms, however, it may be possible for society to critically reevaluate them. At least, that is the hope behind this work. However, in closing, there is one conclusion that remains obvious throughout this text: sex really is still politics.

Appendix A



http://faculty.uml.edu/sgallagher/GENDERSTUDIESTXT_files/anita_testify1.gif

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